

## America is raped — and pays for the pleasure

An increasingly submissive American population pays for the right to be spied on through the most advanced technology, the development of which it willingly or not contributes to. It is an absurd situation, of course. Phishing, spamming, browser hijacking, and identity theft — all monetizing our data — became as acceptable as the practice of the government spying on Americans.

Real-time interception no longer requires that an agency show “probable cause.” The “pen register” and “trap and trace” devices of yesteryear required at least a court order. An enlightened artist friend wrote to me: “Please don’t cast some blanket statement that ‘America does not care’.” It does not! Less than 10 years ago the Washington Post published a series on *Top Secret America* (authored by Priest and Arkin). At that time, 1,931 companies were engaged in top secret work for the government; 4,048 organizations were involved in domestic counterterrorism and homeland security. These realities make the former Soviet regime, which Americans deplored, seem innocuous. In the free USA, where no one expects snooping and spying on Americans, front companies do the dirty work. On the bright side, this burgeoning security force helps to reduce unemployment rates, as it did in the USSR before its implosion. With almost 900,000 people given clearances on secret matters, one can only infer how many are otherwise busy keeping America safe.

Having lived under a dictatorial regime, I had the honor of discovering, after an earthquake, the microphone placed in the walls of our apartment — of course, for our own protection, and at no charge to us. I tried to return the Western made listening device to its owners. Nobody wanted it, neither the State enterprise that owned the building, nor the police, and even less the secret police. Americans buy, with their own money, the devices that will be used to violate their privacy. *Alexa* broadcasts not only orgasms, but also patterns of consumption. So does *Siri* and other programs and apps. Every step of a cellular phone owner is documented — even the steps we don’t take! And then we keep paying for upgrades — perversity is limitless. The auto industry claims ownership of data from our use of the cars that we believe we own because we paid for them. Doctors sell our data — contrary to their oath to maintain our privacy. “Colleges are turning students’ phones into surveillance machines, tracking the locations of hundreds of thousands” — is a headline that should bring the students up in arms. But they don’t care.

Remember: “The right of people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated.” How many Americans ever felt that they would have to voice their concern about being violated — and paying for it — instead of being protected? The most recent report from the FBI’s Inspector General details how those tenured bureaucrats, who Americans employ (good salaries and fringe benefits) to safeguard their liberties, violate the Constitution. Few, if any, care. Not the media. Shopping is priority number one — we need more and better devices to spy on us. The political spectacle of a dysfunctional Union that is falling apart — our new soap opera — is way more exciting than safeguarding the integrity of the political system. Fake news contributes generously to a melodrama bordering slapstick comedy.

America is still the land of opportunity and freedom. But if Americans will not make preserving civic rights their main concern, we might regret giving indulgence more free rein than engaging ourselves to keep America as the home of the free and the brave.